DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 642 RC 016 431

AUTHOR Deseran, Forrest A.; And Others
TITLE Farm Family Life in Louisiana. Bulletin No. 770.
INSTITUTION Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge. Agricultural Experiment Station.
PUB DATE Sep 85
NOTE 32p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Decision Making; Demography; Employed Women; *Employment; Family Income; *Family Life; Family Structure; *Farmers; Females; Males; Quality of Life; Rural Environment; Rural Family; *Rural Farm Residents; Sex Role; *Spouses
IDENTIFIERS *Louisiana

ABSTRACT

Data from a 1982 state-wide survey of 764 Louisiana farm households were analyzed to assess the relationship between conjugal work-role arrangements and four dimensions of farm family life: socio-demographic characteristics, scale and type of farm operation, farm and household decision-making and allocation of tasks, and subjective aspects of farm family life. Findings revealed over 50% of husbands and 33% of wives worked off farm; younger families had one or both spouse(s) employed off farm; presence of older children was positively associated with wives' off-farm employment; spouses working off farm had higher levels of education; a substantial proportion of reported income derived from non-farm earnings, with husbands employed off farm earning more than did other families. Other findings indicated farm operations in which the husband only farmed were larger (in acreage and sales) than those in which the husband was employed off farm; farms where only the wife worked off farm were the largest; wives, regardless of labor status, reported working relatively few hours on the farm; allocation of daily family tasks/decisions generally followed traditional lines; couples expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction with life circumstances; and over 67% of couples sampled were uncertain or pessimistic about their future in farming. (NEC)

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FARM FAMILY LIFE IN LOUISIANA

FORREST A. DESERAN, EDITH L. BATZ, and N. REE SIMPKINS

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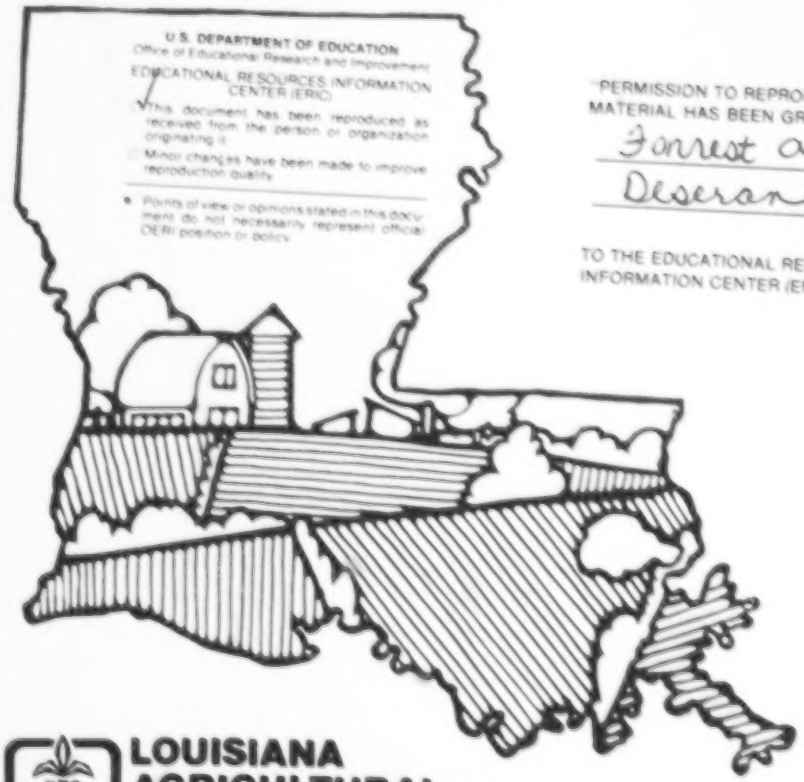

RC016431

LOUISIANA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL CENTER

Bulletin No. 770
September 1985

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Acknowledgments

The research reported herein is a contribution to Hatch Project 2164 and Southern Regional Project S-184. The authors gratefully acknowledge Robert Soileau and James Land of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service for obtaining and developing the sample, Charles Kirby and Brian Roth for their computer expertise, and Gloria Henderson for typing the manuscript.

Farm Family Life in Louisiana: A Profile

FORREST A. DESERAN, EDITH L. BATZ, AND N. REE SIMPKINS[1]

Issues associated with the changing structure of agriculture in the U.S. have been the focus of increasing attention. Once characterized by the pervasiveness of the full-time family farm, the agricultural sector is shifting to a dualistic structure in which a small number of large, capital intensive operations serve national and international markets, and a much larger number of smaller farm operations serve specialized local markets (Buttel and Larson, 1982). One of the distinctive patterns to emerge from this changing structure is the increasing off-farm employment of farm operators and their family members (Carlin and Ghelfi, 1979; Fuguitt et al., 1977).

It is estimated that in the U.S. about half of all farm husbands and more than one-third of all farm wives are employed off the farm (Banks and Kalbacher, 1981; Jones and Rosenfeld, 1981). Clearly, off-farm employment has become an established part of farm family life. Less clear, however, is the impact these changes have on farm family life. Because the farm family represents a unique organization of family work roles where typically the "home" and place of business are the same, employment off the farm by any family member has direct implications for how household and farm labor is allocated.

There is evidence, for example, that farm wives are playing an increasingly important role in decision-making and other tasks in family farm (e.g., Scholl, 1982; Jones and Rosenfeld, 1981; Wilkening and Ahrens, 1979). Additionally, off-farm employment has been linked to increased stress in farm families (Kada, 1980) and shifts in political beliefs (Buttel and Larson, 1982).

This study examined the relationship between off-farm employment and various aspects of farm family life in Louisiana. Toward this end, data from a state-wide survey of farm households were analyzed to assess the degree to which on- and off-farm work roles of farm spouses affected other aspects of family life. More specifically, the relationship between conjugal work-role arrangements and four dimensions of farm family life were studied: (1) socio-demographic characteristics, (2) scale and type

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of farm operations, (3) farm and household decision-making and allocation of tasks, and (4) subjective aspects of farm family life. While these dimensions are not necessarily exhaustive, they represent relevant aspects of the social organization and quality of life of farm families and provide the basis for a sociological profile of farm families in Louisiana.

Source of Data

The Sample

Data for this research are from a mail survey of Louisiana farm households. The sample was drawn from a listing provided by the national office of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) in Kansas City, Missouri. The listing, which is a computerized file of names and addresses of Louisiana residents who registered with the ASCS as of 1981, contains more than 98,000 entries and represents the most comprehensive centralized list of Louisiana farmers available.

The sampling procedure involved several steps. First, a random sample of 2,500 entries was selected from the ASCS file and then visually inspected to delete as many corporate and out-of-state land holders as possible. This reduced the list to 2,058 entries, each of which was sent a letter explaining the nature of the survey and indicating that a questionnaire would follow. Returns from this initial mailing identified a sizable proportion (28 percent) of the sampled households that were either inaccessible (i.e., moved with no forwarding address, deceased, etc.) or were no longer involved in farming. This resulted in an adjusted sample size of 1,472.

Following the procedures suggested by Dillman (1978), questionnaires were sent to the 1,472 households in the adjusted sample. Follow-up reminders were sent to all respondents within 1 week of the survey mailing. Approximately 2 weeks later, additional questionnaires and letters were mailed to those who had failed to reply. Overall, 52 percent of the households responded to the survey with useable questionnaires (sample development is summarized in Table A-1 of Appendix A). This return rate is generally considered to be acceptable in survey research of this type, although a higher return rate is desirable (Dillman, 1978).

The Instrument

The questionnaire used in this study was designed to elicit information along a number of dimensions of farm family life in Louisiana. Considerable attention was devoted to the physical appearance and clarity of the instrument, as recommended by Dillman (1978). Responses to the instrument from a panel of social scientists and a pilot survey of 100

randomly selected Louisiana farm households were taken into consideration in constructing the final 14-page questionnaire. None of the pilot households was included in the final sample used in the analysis. Those questionnaire items pertinent to this bulletin are reproduced in Appendix B and are more fully discussed in the text as they become relevant.

A Farm Family Typology

As mentioned at the outset, the major aim of this study was to determine if off-farm employment had an effect on farm family life. Therefore, 417 husband/wife families directly involved in agricultural production were included in this analysis. This omitted families headed by a single adult and families that owned farmland but did not farm.

Because the family is of primary concern, it is important to emphasize that the family is conceptualized as an organization of differentiated roles, the performance of which gives rise to the character and substance of family life. The particular focus in this research was on work roles as defined by the employment status of spouses. A four-part typology of work-role organization characterizing U.S. farm families is used here (Coughenour and Swanson, 1983; Deseran et al., 1984):

Type I: Traditional—husband and wife involved on the farm, neither employed off the farm;
Type II: Traditional, part-time—husband farms and works off farm, wife involved on farm only;
Type III: Dual career—husband farms only, wife employed off farm;
Type IV: Dual career, part-time—both spouses involved on farm and employed off farm.

This typology provides a comparative framework within which to examine specified aspects of farm family life.[2]

Findings

Farm Family Types

In Table 1 the distribution of farm family types in this sample is reported and compared with findings from studies using the same typology for farm families in Kentucky (Coughenour and Swanson, 1983) and the U.S. (Deseran et al., 1984).[3] Two observations about the findings reported

[2]Although the family is of central conceptual interest, it should be kept in mind that the married couple is treated here as the basic unit of analysis. This does not deny the importance of other farm family members, especially children (see Deseran, forthcoming), but recognizes that the work-role status of spouses is a key factor in family organization.

[3]The Kentucky study (Coughenour and Swanson, 1983) was conducted in 1979 with a sample size of 240 families; the nation-wide study (Deseran et al., 1984) used 1977 Current Population Survey data on 1,776 farm families. These two studies are cited because of their comparability regarding the family typology.

Table 1.—The distribution of farm family types in samples from Louisiana, Kentucky, and the United States

Farm family type	Louisiana[1] (N = 417)	Kentucky[2] (N = 240)	U.S.[3] (N = 1,772)
	%		
I Traditional—Neither spouse works off farm	32.9	35.0	28.8
II Traditional, Part-time—Husband employed off farm, wife not	28.0	26.3	26.5
III Dual Career—Wife employed off farm, husband not	12.5	15.4	13.3
IV Dual Career, Part-time—Both spouses employed off farm	26.6	23.3	31.4

[1]Source, Survey by authors, 1982.
[2]Source, Coughenour and Swanson (1983).
[3]Source, Deseran *et al.*, 1984.

in Table 1 warrant comment.

First, off-farm employment is prevalent among Louisiana farm families. More than half the husbands and more than a third of the wives report off-farm employment. Traditional (Type I) farm families account for only about 33 percent of the sample, indicating that such "traditional" work role organization is the exception rather than the rule among farm families.

Second, the distribution across types of families in the Louisiana sample and the samples of farm families in Kentucky and for the U.S. is very similar. This latter observation lends validity to the family typology used in this study and indicates that the farm family work-roles found in Louisiana reflect a national pattern.

Findings for specified aspects of farm family life in Louisiana were organized into four major areas: (1) socio-demographic characteristics, (2) farm operation characteristics, (3) allocation of decision-making and tasks, and (4) subjective aspects of farm family life. Findings for each of these areas were compared by family type.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

A number of socio-demographic factors typically used to depict family structure are relevant to our interests in on- and off-farm employment of spouses: age structure, presence of children at home, educational attainment, and income. These variables provide the basis for a descriptive profile of the farm families in our sample (Table 2).

Age Structure. The mean age of husbands and wives reported in Table 2 indicate that Type I farm couples are substantially older than any of the other types and that Type IV couples are the youngest. Wives tend to be younger (by about 3 years) than their husbands, reflecting normative

Table 2.—Selected socio-demographic characteristics of Louisiana farm families by farm family type

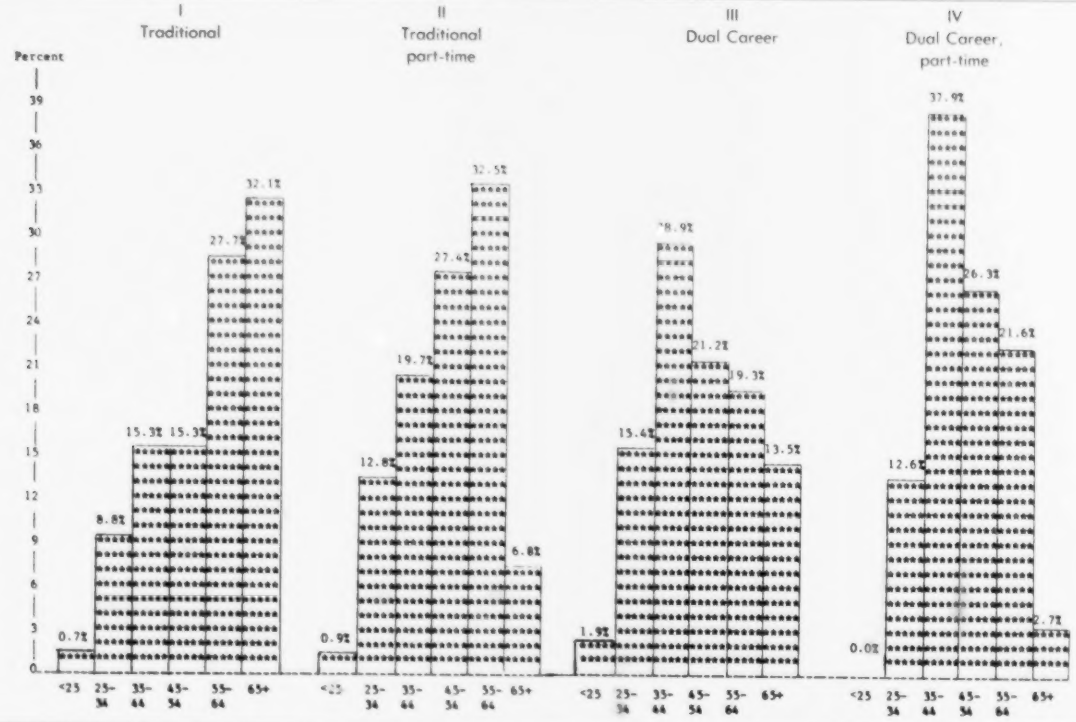
Selected socio-demographic characteristics	Farm family type			
	I Traditional (N = 137)	II Traditional, part-time (N = 117)	III Dual career (N = 52)	IV Dual career, part-time (N = 111)
Age (means)				
Husband	57.3	50.8	50.3	47.3
Wife	53.9	47.8	46.5	44.3
Families with at least one child at home (percent):				
14-18 years	19.0	23.1	38.5	36.0
6-13 years	21.2	24.0	26.9	27.0
Under 6 years	16.8	18.8	15.4	18.0
Educational attainment (percent)				
Husband				
Less than high school degree	37.3	18.7	25.0	18.7
High school degree	20.6	17.6	22.5	21.5
Some college/college degree	37.3	42.9	30.0	41.9
Some grad/grad degree	4.9	20.9	17.5	18.3
			$X^2 = 25.16^{**}$	
Wife				
Less than high school degree	28.5	16.5	7.7	6.5
High school degree	23.5	30.8	20.5	25.8
Some college/college degree	36.2	45.1	53.8	49.5
Some grad/grad degree	11.8	7.7	18.0	18.3
			$X^2 = 19.87^{*}$	
Total family earnings[1] (percent)				
Less than $10,000	32.7	11.1	30.8	7.2
$10,000-$29,999	32.1	42.7	26.9	36.0
$30,000-$49,999	11.7	16.2	21.2	36.9
More than $49,999	19.0	29.9	21.2	19.8
			$X^2 = 58.74^{***}$	

[1]Multiple responses were possible.
[2]Combined farm and nonfarm earnings for 1981.
$^{*}p<.05$, $^{**}p<.01$, $^{***}p<.001$

patterns of age differences between spouses. Findings for combined husband/wife age reported in Table 3 portray the age structure of each family type in greater detail.

The age structure of Type I farm families was acutely skewed toward the older end of the age scale. Nearly one-third of the farm couples in this group have an average age of 65 or more years, and well over half were older than 54. Type II farm couples also tend to be older, although significantly fewer were in the 65 or older category (6.8 percent). Type III couples were more evenly distributed—about one-third more than 54 years old and about half less than 45 years old.

Table 3.—Age distribution by farm family type[1]



[1]Husband/wife average ages, $X^2 = 70.27$, $p. < .0001$.

Type IV couples had the youngest age structure with only 2.7 percent in the 65 or over age category and nearly 50 percent less than 45 years old. These findings demonstrate that the family typology is distinctly differentiated by the age structure of spouses. There is also a definite association between age and off-farm employment status—the greater the involvement in off-farm employment, the younger the couples.

Presence of children. Families with at least one child at home were divided into the following age categories: those with children under 6, between 6 and 13, and between 14 and 18. As expected, older families are not as likely as younger families to have children at home. Of interest in regard to work role arrangements, families with wives employed off farm (Types III and IV) are much more likely than families with nonworking wives to have children at home.

While there were only trivial differences between the proportion of working- and nonworking-wife families who had younger children at home, there were substantial differences when the presence of older children was considered. Fewer than one-fourth of the nonworking wives, compared with more than one-third of the working wives, had at least one child between 14 and 18 years at home.[4] In this regard, farm family types are characterized by differences in the number having older children at home.[5]

Educational attainment. Education is reported in Table 2 as the percent of husbands and wives who have attained specified levels of education. Several observations are noteworthy. First, the educational level for Type I couples was appreciably below that of the other couples sampled. More than 37 percent of the husbands and 28 percent of the wives in this group attained less than a high school degree.

Second, wives had a markedly higher overall level of educational attainment. This was especially evident in a comparison of the percent of husbands and wives who did not complete high school. Third, and most important, there was a strong positive association between educational attainment levels and the off-farm employment status for both

[4]Although not reported in the text of this bulletin, these findings are further supported when the age of wives is controlled. Of the wives between 34 and 45 years old who have older children at home, 66.7 percent are employed off the farm.

[5]The positive association between the off-farm employment of farm wives and the presence of older children noted here has also been found in studies of nonfarm families by researchers concerned with the effects of family life cycle stages on patterns of women's labor force participation (Oppenheimer, 1982). This suggests that the decisions of farm wives to seek off-farm employment are at least partially influenced by circumstances experienced in U.S. families in general (such increased financial demands at certain stages in the family life cycle) and are not necessarily a function of any unique characteristic of farm family demands.

husbands and wives. More than 60 percent of the husbands and about 70 percent of the wives who were employed off farm reported having at least some college education. This represents an average of about 20 percentage points higher than for spouses who do not work off farm.[6]

Family Earnings. Type I families earned considerably less than other family types (Table 2). Type II families, although disproportionately represented in the highest income category, were concentrated in the moderate income levels. Type III families revealed a more evenly distributed earnings attainment pattern, while the earnings of Type IV families were skewed toward the upper end of the scale (more than 56 percent earned more than $30,000 in 1981).

While distinct patterns were not easily discernible, it was clear that families with off-farm employment earned more than those without such sources of income. Furthermore, a comparison of the earnings for Type II and III families (which are distinguished from one another by which spouse works off-farm) suggested that the husband's off-farm employment contributed more to total family earnings than did the wife's off-farm employment.

This section touched on only a few major socio-economic characteristics of the Louisiana farm families in the sample. However, findings clearly demonstrated the diversity of the population and that the work role typology provided descriptively distinct categories of farm families. This is especially evident with regards to age structure, educational attainment levels, and earnings. Attention now turns to an assessment of selected characteristics of farm operations.

Characteristics of Farm Operations

Important dimensions of the organization of farm operations include farm size, sales from agricultural products, commodities raised, and amount of labor expended. These characteristics are examined here to more precisely describe and differentiate farm family types.

Acreage and Sales. Average farm size and sales varied in distinct and largely predictable patterns in relation to farm family type (Table 4). Most notably, farm operations where the husband was not employed off the farm (Types I and III) were much larger than the other types. Type III

[6]It should be noted that the education levels of those sampled in this study tend to be higher than what is found in census data for Louisiana farm families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980). This is probably due to a sampling bias in that mail surveys generally yield disproportionately higher return rates from the more educated segments of the population. Despite this bias, the important consideration here is that distinct patterns emerge across the farm family types that indicate a relationship between education and employment status.

Table 4.—Acreage and value of agricultural products sold by farm family type

Acreage and sales	Farm family type			
	I Traditional	II Traditional, part-time	III Dual career	IV Dual career, part-time
Average farm size (acres)	453	180	522	143
Value of agricultural products sold (percent)				
Less than $5,000	34.0	61.7	45.6	58.2
$5,000 to $9,999	8.7	14.8	2.2	17.7
$10,000 to $19,999	9.7	7.4	6.7	12.7
$20,000 to $39,999	6.8	6.1	8.9	2.5
$40,000 or more	40.8	9.9	46.7	8.9
			$X^2 = 61.44^*$	

*p = .0001

operations were also larger on the average than Type I operations, suggesting among other things, that the on-farm labor of wives may not be a crucial factor in determining the scale of farming operations where husbands are full-time operators (recall that Type III wives are employed off farm). On the other hand, farms where the husband was employed off farm (Types II and IV) tended to be smaller when wives were also employed off farm, although the value of sales remained about the same for these farm families.

One of the more distinct patterns to emerge from the figures in Table 4 was the bimodal distribution of farm income for Types I and III operations. A large proportion of these farms fell into one or the other extreme categories of sales, a pattern which reflects the dualistic structure of agriculture alluded to earlier (e.g., Buttel and Larson, 1982).

Farm Labor. The findings reported in Table 5 show a clear association between hours worked on the farm by Types I and III husbands and the bimodal pattern of sales; most of these operators worked either less than 11 hours or more than 40 hours per week. Considerably more Type III husbands than Type I husbands spent more than 40 hours per week on farm work, probably because of the larger acreage involved.

As anticipated, most of the off-farm employed husbands worked fewer hours per week on the farm than those husbands without other employment. Less expected were the hours spent on farm work by wives. With the exception of Type I families, about 80 percent of the wives reported less than 11 hours per week spent on farm work, whatever their off-farm employment status. Interestingly, about 29 percent of the Type I wives (whose husbands are not employed off-farm) spent an average of more than 20 hours per week on farm work compared with only about 8 percent of the Type II wives (whose husbands do work off farm). This is probably due to the difference in scale between Types I and II farms—the former are larger and require more labor.

Table 5.—Hours per week spent on farm work by spouses and percent farms that hired nonfamily labor, by farm family type

Farm labor characteristics	Farm family type			
	I Traditional	II Traditional part-time	III Dual career	IV Dual career part-time
Hours per week spent on farm work				
Husband (percent)				
Less than 11 hours	26.4	67.7	23.5	52.5
11-20 hours	11.6	10.1	2.0	22.2
21-40 hours	13.2	13.1	9.8	17.2
More than 40 hours	48.8	9.1	64.7	8.1
			$X^2 = 121.67^*$	
Wife (percent)				
Less than 11 hours	57.8	83.1	78.7	90.0
11-20 hours	12.8	8.4	12.8	4.4
21-40 hours	14.7	7.2	6.3	4.4
More than 40 hours	14.7	1.2	2.1	1.1
			$X^2 = 36.15^*$	
Percent hiring nonfamily labor	41.1	25.3	66.0	24.7

*p. < .0001

Agricultural Products. Respondents were asked to list information about three of their major agricultural crop or livestock products in 1981 (Appendix B). Only figures for the types of crops or livestock listed first by respondents are reported in Table 6, providing a rough estimate of the production characteristics of the farms in the sample.

More than two-thirds of the farm families reported "crops" as a major product, while less than half listed "livestock" as a major product. Soybeans, rice, and cotton were the most frequently listed crops, while

Table 6.—Major agricultural products by farm family type

Agricultural Products	Farm family type			
	I Traditional	II Traditional, part-time	III Dual career	IV Dual career, part-time
Crops (Number farms)[1]	106	67	40	69
Rice	24.5%	22.4%	27.5%	8.7%
Cotton	19.8	11.9	20.0	15.9
Soybeans	17.9	29.9	22.5	23.2
Hay	9.4	6.0	7.5	20.3
Sugar	5.7	1.5	2.5	4.3
Other	22.6	28.4	20.0	27.5
Livestock (Number farms)[1]	65	42	20	49
Cattle (beef)	79.6%	64.3%	75.0%	77.6%
Hogs	4.6	4.8	10.0	8.2
Other	15.8	31.0	15.0	14.3

[1]Multiple responses were possible.

beef cattle was the predominant livestock product reported. A comparison by farm family type revealed few differences in agricultural products listed with the exception that Type IV were more likely to grow hay than were other farm types.

Conjugal Task Allocation and Decision-Making

The description of Louisiana farm families to this point has been in terms of both socio-economic and farm-related characteristics. In this study, responses to questions about who had major responsibility for selected household and farm tasks and decisions were also examined. Answers are coded on a five-point scale ranging from "husband always" to "wife always" with "both husband and wife about equally" at the midpoint (see Appendix B).

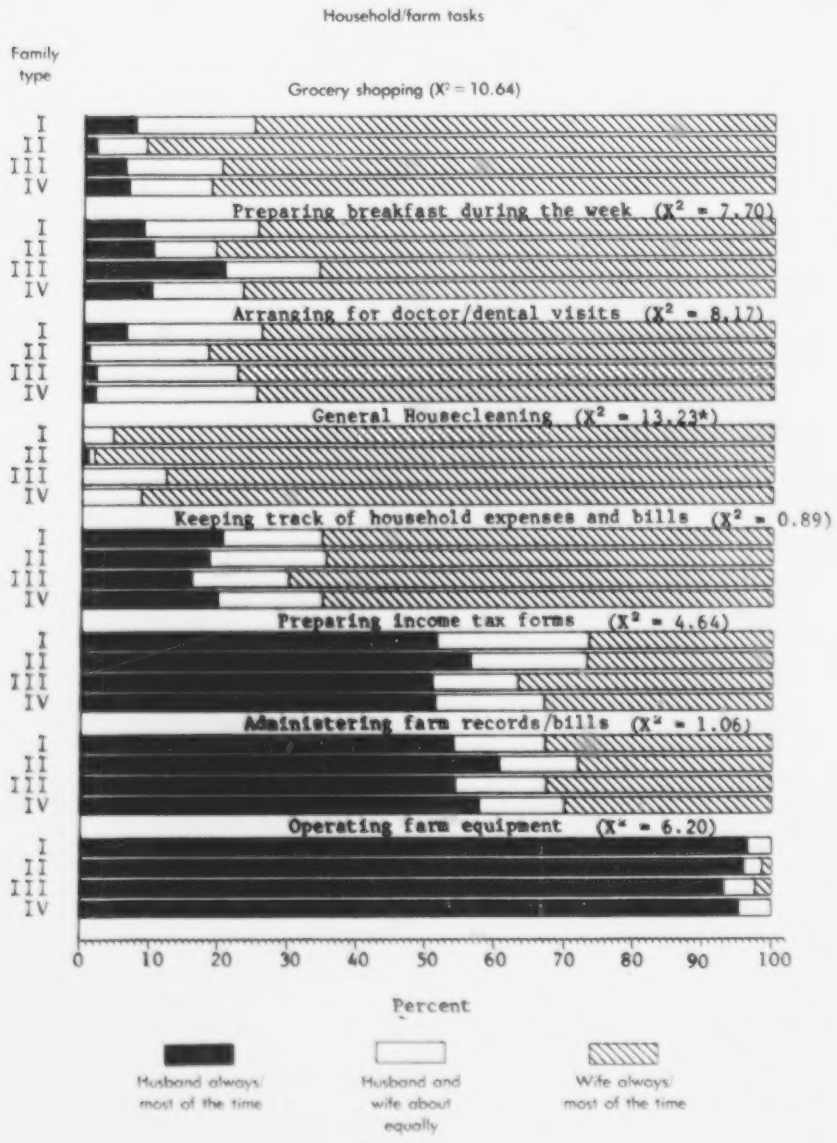
Allocation of farm and household tasks. Results for the allocation of farm and household tasks are presented graphically in Table 7. To simplify the presentation of findings, three categories of responses are reported: (1) husband's major responsibility, which combines "husband always" and "husband more than wife," (2) equally shared responsibility, and (3) wife's major responsibility, which combines "wife more than husband" and "wife always."

Immediately evident is the degree to which most of the tasks listed are clearly sex-linked, indicating a distinct division of labor between spouses. House cleaning, grocery shopping, arranging for visits to the doctor or dentist, and preparing breakfast during the week are tasks for which well over three-fourths of the wives in our sample did either more than their husbands or all of the time. Husbands, on the other hand, nearly always had major responsibility for operating farm equipment.

Tasks involving record-keeping and paying bills yield somewhat different patterns. In general, wives were more often involved with keeping track of household bills and expenses, whereas husbands were more likely to take care of federal income tax records and to administer farm records and bills. Even so, responsibility for these tasks tended to be less sex-specific or tied to the farm/household dichotomy than were the other tasks examined. For example, about one-third of the husbands in the sample had at least equal responsibility for keeping household records and bills, while an even greater proportion of wives had similar responsibilities for administering farm records and bills.

Also of note in this regard, responsibility for income tax forms (for which almost half of the wives shared equal responsibility) involved both farm and household financial considerations. These findings suggest that the conjugal division of labor in farm families is not necessarily determined by traditional distinctions between household and farm domains.

Table 7.—Conjugal allocation of household and farm tasks by farm family type


Household/farm tasks
Family type
Grocery shopping ($X^2 = 10.64$)
Preparing breakfast during the week ($X^2 = 7.70$)
Arranging for doctor/dental visits ($X^2 = 8.17$)
General Housecleaning ($X^2 = 13.23$*)
Keeping track of household expenses and bills ($X^2 = 0.89$)
Preparing income tax forms ($X^2 = 4.64$)
Administering farm records/bills ($X^2 = 1.06$)
Operating farm equipment ($X^2 = 6.20$)
I
II
III
IV
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Percent
Husband always/ most of the time
Husband and wife about equally
Wife always/ most of the time

*p. < .05

Especially noteworthy in this regard is the central role that many farm wives played in the financial and record keeping aspects of farm operations.

Returning to the question of how off-farm employment affects farm couples, work status had little bearing on the conjugal distribution of farm or household tasks (Table 7). General housecleaning was the only task to generate a significant X^2 value, yet this task was very clearly the responsibility of almost all of the wives. Although moderate differences occurred among the four family types, the general patterns of task allocation remained similar within each family type. The employment status of either spouse had little evident impact on how daily work routines were organized.

Household and farm decision-making. The findings for decision-making in farm families (Table 8) indicate that decision-making was more often a shared activity than was the allocation and performance of tasks. Decisions concerning what car to buy, where to live, whether the wife should get a new job, and where to go to church involved both husband and wife equally for more than half the families sampled. However, responsibility for most of the decision items included in the questionnaire rested with husbands more than wives. This was especially the case for decisions about farm operations; for such decisions, husbands had a major voice in more than two-thirds of the families.

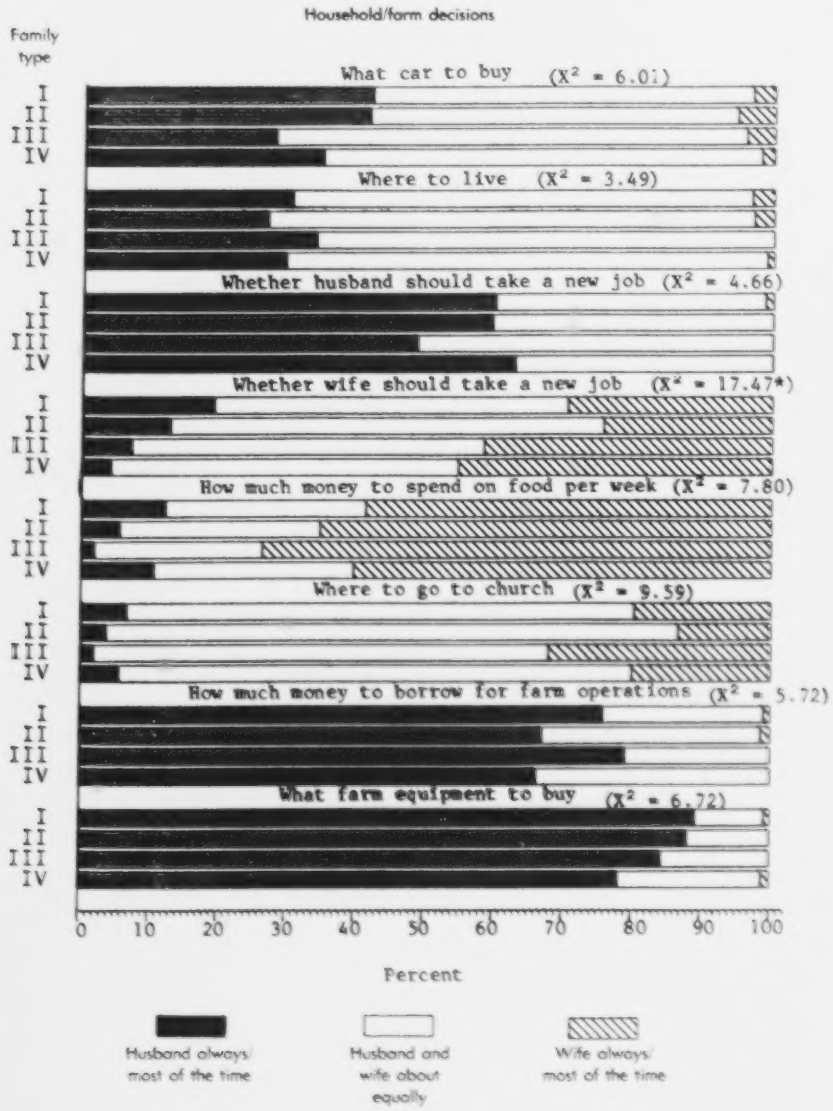
An inspection of Table 8 reveals little substantial differentiation in patterns of decision-making among the family types. As would be expected, wives employed off-farm were more likely to have a say in whether they should take a new job ($X^2 = 17.47$, $p. > .07$), but beyond that there were no significant differences in decision-making. These findings clearly demonstrate that who makes decisions in farm families was determined more by the type of decision at hand than by the employment status of spouses.

Subjective Well-Being: Present and Future

Attention in this section is on subjective aspects of farm family life in Louisiana. More specifically, self-reported expressions of satisfaction with everyday life and how couples evaluate their future in farming were examined.

Satisfaction of Louisiana farm couples. Satisfaction, which is often treated as a subjective indicator of well-being or quality of life (e.g., Andrews and Withey, 1976; Campbell et al., 1976), is operationalized as responses to questions about how satisfied couples were with four general categories of everyday life experiences (see Appendix A). These

Table 8.—Conjugal decision-making by farm family type


Household/farm decisions
Family type
What car to buy (X^2 = 6.01)
Where to live (X^2 = 3.49)
Whether husband should take a new job (X^2 = 4.66)
Whether wife should take a new job (X^2 = 17.47*)
How much money to spend on food per week (X^2 = 7.80)
Where to go to church (X^2 = 9.59)
How much money to borrow for farm operations (X^2 = 5.72)
What farm equipment to buy (X^2 = 6.72)
I
II
III
IV
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Percent
Husband always/ most of the time
Husband and wife about equally
Wife always/ most of the time

*p. < .01

categories are (a) social environment—family life, circle of friends, and community as a place to live; (b) general life circumstances—life as a whole and accomplishments in life; (c) family resources—living quarters, standard of living, and health; and (d) local services—public services, services for the elderly, child care services, and youth programs and facilities.

Answers to each item range on a five-point scale from "very satisfied" (+2) to "very dissatisfied" (−2). Because of the high pair-wise agreement found in the responses of couples, average scores for couples are reported only.

The bar graphs in Table 9 provide an overview of the findings for satisfaction for all family types combined. With the exception of items in the "local services" category, satisfaction among the couples is relatively high.

While reflecting the general pattern of relatively high satisfaction noted above, the findings reported by farm type (Table 10) uncover few significant variations among the mean satisfaction scores. The analysis of variance F values (SAS Institute Inc., 1982) are statistically significant for three of the 12 items: health, public services, and youth facilities and programs.[7] One discernable pattern in Table 10 is that satisfaction scores tended to be lower for dual career (Type III) than for other couples. Although the differences in mean scores were not statistically significant, the pattern was consistent for 10 of the 12 items.

Perceptions of the future in farming. In addition to questions about satisfaction with selected aspects of their daily lives, couples were asked to evaluate their own future in farming. Answers to this question ranged on a five-point scale from "very favorably" to "very unfavorably" (see Appendix B).

Most apparent from the findings was the high degree of uncertainty among the couples about their future in farming (Table 11). Almost half of all respondents reported they were unsure about what the future holds. Fewer than one-third of the couples reported favorable estimates of the future.

These findings showed little differentiation by family type ($X^2 = 18.15$, $p = NS$). The off-farm employment of one or both spouses appeared to have little to do with expressed optimism or pessimism concerning a couple's future in farming. These findings also indicate the scale of farm operation had no apparent effect on evaluations of the future (recall that Types I and III are substantially larger than Types II and IV farm operations).

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[7] A post analysis of variance Scheffe test for multiple comparisons of means performed on the items with significant F values revealed no distinct patterns (see SAS Institute Inc., 1982: p. 169, for a discussion of this procedure).

Table 9.—Mean satisfaction scores for all farm couples

[1] Scores may range from −2 ("very dissatisfied") to +2 ("very satisfied") with 0 ("unsure") at the midpoint.

Table 10 —Mean satisfaction scores by farm family type

Life domain	Level of satisfaction	Mean scores	F values[1]
Social environment			
1 Community as a place to live		1.56 1.54 1.34 1.35	1.07
2 Circle of friends		1.51 1.63 1.42 1.51	0.86
3 Family life		1.36 1.33 1.21 1.48	0.12
General life circumstances			
4 Life as a whole		1.40 1.54 1.21 1.58	2.09
5 Accomplishments in life		1.63 1.57 1.59 1.66	0.83
Personal resources			
6 Standard of living		1.09 1.40 0.84 1.45	1.66
7 Living quarters		1.36 1.49 1.30 1.39	1.18
8 Health		1.32 1.46 1.23 1.47	5.68*
Local services			
9 Public services		0.81 0.63 0.34 0.42	3.49*
10 Services for the elderly		0.09 0.23 −0.06 −0.12	0.79
11 Youth facilities and programs		0.44 0.33 0.19 0.30	
12 Child care services		0.10 0.30 −0.07 0.06	2.36

*p. < .05

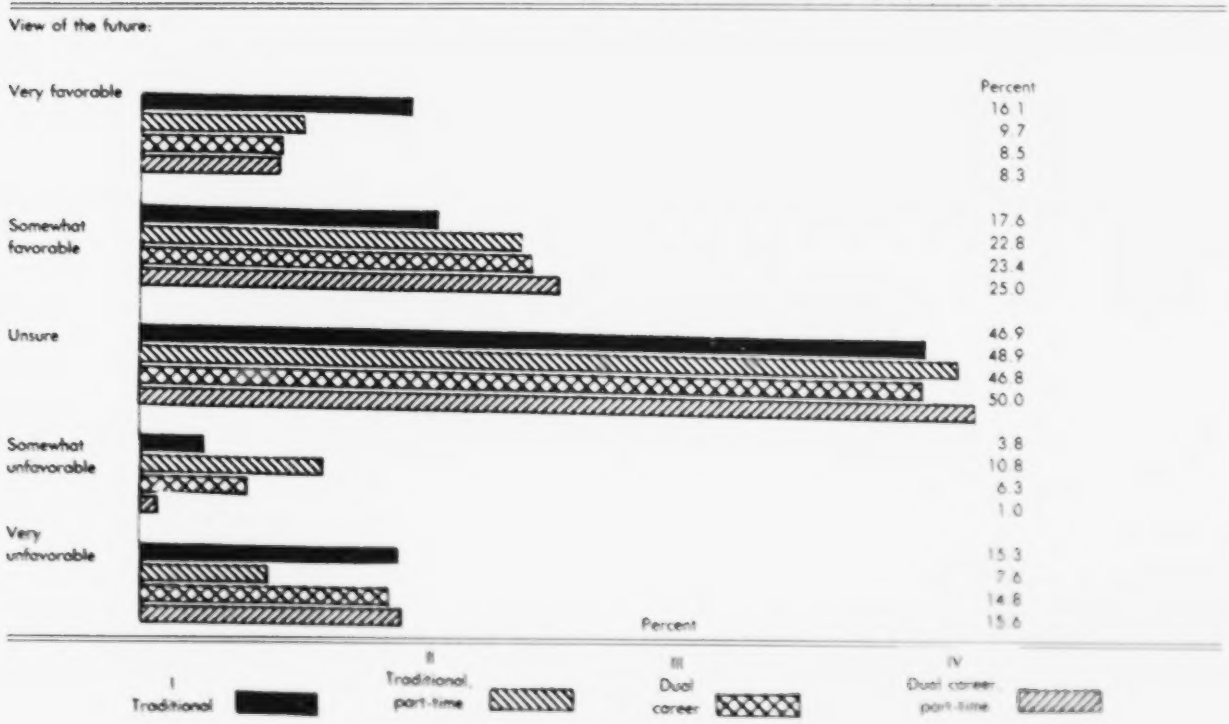
[1]Scores may range from −2 ("very dissatisfied") to +2 ("Very satisfied") with 0 ("unsure") at the midpoint.

F values are for analysis of variance tests for differences among means.

Farm Family Type

I = I II = II III = III IV = IV

Table 11.—How farm couples view their future in farming by family type



It is important to note that these results were in sharp contrast to those dealing with satisfaction, where positive responses were predominant. This suggests that evaluations of the future in farming were not extensions of basic orientations toward life in general, but more than likely reflected an objective evaluation of the condition of the agricultural industry from the point of view of the farm couple.

The degree to which these rather negative estimates of the future in farming indicated either a temporary state of discouragement with current conditions or a more enduring mood of pessimism remains to be seen. Given the nation-wide trend of increasingly concentrated production among fewer and larger operations and the concurrent diminution in the number of traditional family farms, it is likely that these premonitions of the future realistically reflect both the changes that are occurring in the structure of agriculture and the accompanying uncertainties for the future of the family farm.

Summary and Conclusions

The traditional image of the self-sufficient family farm as the basic unit of agricultural production no longer adequately portrays the farming enterprise. While family-owned and operated farms continue to dominate in the United States, the work-role organization of the farm family has changed dramatically as it has responded to larger market demands and economic forces (Wilkening, 1981). One of the most basic changes in the farm family has been an increased dependence upon off-farm work to supplement farm income. The purpose of this bulletin was to document the degree to which off-farm work has affected Louisiana farm families.

The findings reported here were from a survey of Louisiana farm families conducted in 1982. For analytical purposes, four types of farm families were identified and compared: traditional; traditional, part-time ; dual career; and dual career, part-time. Findings were presented for socio-demographic characteristics, farm operation characteristics, the allocation of family tasks and decision-making, and subjective aspects of family life. Some of the salient findings can be summarized as follows:

1. Off-farm employment was pervasive among Louisiana farm families. More than half the husbands and a third of the wives reported working off farm.

2. Families that had one spouse employed off farm were considerably younger than families in which neither spouse was employed off farm, and families with both spouses working off farm were the youngest.

3. The presence of older children in the home was positively associated with wives' off-farm employment. The presence of younger children was not associated with the off-farm employment of wives.

4. Spouses who worked off farm had markedly higher levels of educational attainment than spouses who did not work off farm.

5. A substantial proportion of reported income derived from non-farm earnings. In this respect, families with husbands employed off farm earned considerably more than did other families.

6. Farm operations in which the husband only farmed were appreciably larger in scale (based upon acreage and sales) than those in which the husband was employed off farm. Farms where only the wife worked off farm were the largest.

7. Wives, regardless of their labor force status, tended to report working relatively few hours on the farm.

8. The allocation of daily family tasks and decisions generally followed traditional lines. However, the allocation was less sex-specific with respect to financial and record keeping tasks for which a sizeable proportion of wives had at least equal responsibility. The employment status of spouses had little effect on how tasks were allocated.

9. Overall, farm couples expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction with their life circumstances. They were considerably less satisfied with local services, however. The satisfaction expressed by dual career couples (Type III) was consistently lower than that expressed by other couples, although the differences were not statistically significant.

10. More than two-thirds of the farm couples sampled were uncertain or pessimistic about their future in farming. This outlook was a general pattern across the four family types.

These findings provide only a partial profile of farm families in Louisiana, yet they brought to light some aspects of farm family life that were intriguing. Most evident was the high proportion of families involved in the nonfarm labor force. Similar to what researchers have found elsewhere (e.g., Wilkening, 1981), many Louisiana farm families have had to adapt to changing economic forces and market conditions by seeking alternative employment. Clearly, off-farm work is—and will continue to be—a key factor in the earning capacity of many farm families in Louisiana.

Beyond the basic changes in the work-role organization of farm couples, little evidence was found to indicate that these changes had an appreciable impact on other dimensions of family life. For example, the allocation of routine household tasks and who made decisions in the home remained relatively consistent, regardless of off-farm work experiences. Furthermore, couples expressed relatively high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of their lives, whether or not they worked off farm.

Such findings suggest that, contrary to expectations, there is little correspondence between the income-producing work of husbands and wives and daily family-oriented routines and attitudes. From a sociological standpoint, this is of interest in that traditional sex-specific roles of

family life appear to be resistent to basic changes in the larger economic structure and the employment status of spouses.

Whether a function of entrenched sex-role norms or of demands inherent in life on the farm, it appears that farm families have been able to adapt to economic change at the same time that they have retained traditional patterns of relationships within the family structure. That the farm family in Louisiana has shown a capacity to retain its traditional patterns in the face of major structural challenges demonstrates the potential for the family farm to remain a viable unit of agricultural production as well as to provide the basis for a meaningful form of family life.

Prospects for the family farm to remain economically viable should be of major concern in future research. Despite the resiliance of the farm family, there is little question that external economic factors will continue to require a heavy reliance on nonfarm earnings for the survival of many family farms. Researchers need to go beyond considerations of agricultural production in itself and examine the interface between the structure of agriculture and the nature of nonfarm labor markets.

Knowledge is needed, for example, about the availability and character of nonfarm employment opportunities, the hiring criteria of local firms, how rural residents go about finding jobs, and the attitudes of potential employers toward hiring members of farm families. Such knowledge is essential for developing strategies and public policy that will allow many farm families to cope better with what they perceive as an uncertain future.

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Appendix A: Supplemental Tables

Table A-1.—Development of sample and return rates for mail survey of Louisiana farm households

Sample status	N	(%)
Total drawn from ACSS Listing	2,500	(100%)
Deleted from sample	1,028	(100%)
Visual inspection[2]	446	(43%)
Undeliverable[3]	290	(28%)
Deceased	161	(16%)
Not applicable	131	(13%)
Included in sample	1,472	(100%)
Completed questionnaires[4]	764	(52%)
Declined to participate	91	(6%)
Incomplete/unusable questionnaire	7	(1%)
No response	610	(41%)

[1]Randomly selected from the listing of Louisiana farmers provided by the national office of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

[2]Cases determined by visual inspection to be corporations or out-of-state residents.

[3]Based upon returns from pre-questionnaire mailing.

[4]Based upon returns from mailing to adjusted sample of 1,472.

Table A-2.—Distribution of respondents in sample by parish

Parish	N	Parish	N	Parish	N
Acadian	43	Grant	4	Sabine	10
Allen	13	Iberia	10	St. Bernard	1
Ascension	3	Iberville	4	St. Charles	0
Assumption	3	Jackson	5	St. Helena	8
Avoyelles	36	Jefferson	2	St. James	1
Beauregard	13	Jefferson Davis	21	St. John	0
Bienville	11	Lafayette	29	St. Landry	53
Bossier	12	Lafourche	10	St. Martin	6
Caddo	26	LaSalle	7	S. Mary	2
Calcasieu	16	Lincoln	23	St. Tammany	5
Caldwell	5	Livingston	7	Tangipahoa	15
Cameron	9	Madison	6	Tensas	4
Catahoula	10	Morehouse	14	Terrebonne	2
Claiborne	16	Natchitoches	14	Union	8
Concordia	6	Orleans	3	Vermilion	41
Desoto	13	Ouachita	21	Vernon	12
E. Baton Rouge	8	Plaquemines	1	Washington	20
East Carroll	9	Pointe Coupee	7	Webster	9
East Feliciana	2	Rapides	22	W. Baton Rouge	1
Evangeline	17	Red River	9	West Carroll	28
Franklin	25	Richland	21	West Feliciana	1
				Winn	2

Table A-3.—Conjugal allocation of household and farm tasks by farm family type

Household farm tasks	Farm family type	Who does these tasks?				
		Husband always	Husband more	Husband and wife equally	Wife more	Wife always
		Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
Grocery shopping	I	1.5	6.0	17.3	45.9	29.3
	II	9	9	7.3	48.2	42.7
	III	2.0	4.0	14.0	32.0	48.0
	IV	0.0	6.5	12.2	31.8	49.5
Prepare breakfast during the week	I	2.4	5.6	16.7	27.8	47.6
	II	3.1	7.1	9.2	22.5	58.2
	III	6.8	13.6	13.6	25.0	40.9
	IV	0.0	10.0	13.3	27.8	48.9
Arrange for doctor and dental visits	I	3.2	3.2	19.7	22.1	52.0
	II	0.0	0.9	17.4	31.2	50.5
	III	0.0	2.0	20.4	22.5	55.1
	IV	0.9	0.9	23.6	26.4	48.1
General house cleaning	I	0.0	0.0	4.6	26.7	68.7
	II	0.9	0.0	0.9	32.4	65.7
	III	0.0	0.0	12.2	30.6	57.1
	IV	0.0	0.0	8.7	26.9	64.4
Keep track of household expenses and bills	I	10.7	9.9	14.5	18.3	40.6
	II	9.8	8.9	17.0	16.1	48.2
	III	4.0	12.0	14.0	10.0	60.0
	IV	7.6	12.4	15.2	15.2	49.5
Fill out federal income tax forms	I	42.3	8.9	22.0	6.5	20.3
	II	46.7	10.3	15.9	6.5	20.6
	III	40.8	10.2	12.2	4.1	32.7
	IV	41.7	9.3	15.7	6.5	26.9
Administer farm records and bills	I	38.8	14.9	13.2	14.9	18.2
	II	49.4	11.2	11.2	7.9	20.2
	III	37.0	17.4	13.1	6.5	26.1
	IV	44.9	12.4	12.4	13.5	16.9
Operate farm equipment	I	0.8	74.8	21.0	3.4	0.0
	II	0.0	81.8	14.3	2.6	1.3
	III	0.0	77.3	15.9	4.6	2.3
	IV	0.0	79.1	16.3	4.7	0.0

Table A-4.—Conjugal decision-making for household and farm matters by farm family type

Household farm matters	Farm family type	Who makes these decisions?				
		Husband always	Husband more	Husband and wife equally	Wife more	Wife always
		Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.	Pct.
What car to buy	I	23.9	18.5	54.6	2.3	0.8
	II	19.6	22.3	52.7	4.5	0.9
	III	12.0	16.0	68.0	4.0	0.0
	IV	17.6	17.6	63.0	0.9	0.9
Where to live	I	19.2	10.8	66.9	1.5	1.5
	II	15.7	11.1	70.4	1.9	0.9
	III	24.0	10.0	66.0	0.0	0.0
	IV	13.1	16.8	69.2	0.9	0.0
Whether husband should take a new job	I	42.6	17.0	39.4	1.1	0.0
	II	44.9	14.6	40.5	0.0	0.0
	III	30.8	18.0	51.3	0.0	0.0
	IV	33.0	29.6	37.5	0.0	0.0
Whether wife should take a new job	I	16.1	2.3	51.7	16.1	13.8
	II	11.4	1.4	62.9	7.1	17.1
	III	4.9	2.4	51.2	17.1	24.4
	IV	2.2	2.2	51.1	23.9	20.7
How much money to spend on food per week	I	8.5	3.9	29.5	26.4	31.8
	II	4.7	0.9	29.3	20.8	44.3
	III	0.0	2.0	24.5	34.7	38.8
	IV	6.9	3.9	29.4	22.6	37.3
Where to go to church	I	5.3	1.5	73.3	9.9	9.9
	II	2.9	1.0	82.9	7.6	5.7
	III	0.0	2.0	66.0	14.0	18.0
	IV	1.9	3.9	74.0	11.5	8.7
How much money to borrow for farm operations	I	55.9	19.8	23.4	0.0	0.9
	II	53.2	13.9	31.7	1.3	0.0
	III	67.4	11.6	20.9	0.0	0.0
	IV	44.7	21.2	34.1	0.0	0.0
What farm equipment to buy	I	67.8	21.5	9.9	0.0	0.0
	II	69.7	18.4	11.8	0.0	0.0
	III	75.6	8.9	15.6	0.0	0.0
	IV	61.6	16.3	20.9	1.2	0.0

Appendix B: Selected Questionnaire Items

About how many hours a week do you (and or your spouse) spend on farm work during the growing season? (Circle number)

Hours per week	MAN OF THE HOUSE	WOMAN OF THE HOUSE
None	1	1
1-10 hours	2	2
11-20 hours	3	3
21-30 hours	4	4
31-40 hours	5	5
More than 40 hours	6	6

What do you estimate was your total gross farm income in 1981? (Circle number)

1. Did not have any farm income in 1981
2. Less than $1,000
3. $1,000 to $2,999
4. $3,000 to $5,999
5. $10,000 to $19,999
6. $20,000 to $39,999
7. $40,000 or more

What were your major agricultural products in 1981? (Please list products and approximate income)

CROPS	INCOME
	$
	$
	$
	$

LIVESTOCK

	$
	$
	$

Now we would like you to give us your opinion on some questions. Please indicate how satisfied you (and your spouse) are with each one. Indicate whether you are (1) very dissatisfied, (2) somewhat dissatisfied, (3) unsure, (4) somewhat satisfied, (5) very satisfied with each of the following:

How satisfied are you:	MAN OF THE HOUSE (Circle number) Very DISSATISFIED				Very SATISFIED	WOMAN OF THE HOUSE (Circle number) Very DISSATISFIED				Very SATISFIED
With your community as a place to live	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With public services (fire, police, education, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With community recreational facilities and programs for youth	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With child care services in your community	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With community services for the elderly	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With your house, apartment, or mobile home	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With your health	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With your standard of living (things you have, like housing, car, furniture, recreation and the like)	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With your circle of friends	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With your family life	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With what you are accomplishing in life	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
With how you feel about life as a whole	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

Here are some questions about how you and your mate divide up some family jobs and decide more specific questions which families often face. Indicate how you and your spouse divide these family jobs.

Who in your family	(Circle number of response) HUSBAND ALWAYS	HUSBAND MORE THAN WIFE	HUSBAND AND WIFE EQUALLY	WIFE MORE THAN HUSBAND	WIFE ALWAYS	NEITHER HUSBAND NOR WIFE
Does the grocery shopping	1	2	3	4	5	6
Prepares breakfast during the week	1	2	3	4	5	6
Makes arrangements for doctor and dentist visits	1	2	3	4	5	6
Does general house cleaning	1	2	3	4	5	6
Keeps track of household expenses and bills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sees that the Federal income tax forms are filled out	1	2	3	4	5	6
Keeps farm records and pays for farm operation bills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Operates farm equipment	1	2	3	4	5	6

Who makes the following decision?	(Circle number of response) HUSBAND ALWAYS	HUSBAND MORE THAN WIFE	HUSBAND AND WIFE EQUALLY	WIFE MORE THAN HUSBAND	WIFE ALWAYS	NEITHER HUSBAND NOR WIFE
What family car to buy	1	2	3	4	5	6
Where to live	1	2	3	4	5	6
Whether the husband should take a new job	1	2	3	4	5	6
Whether the wife should take a new job	1	2	3	4	5	6
How much money your family spends on food per week	1	2	3	4	5	6
Where to go to church	1	2	3	4	5	6
How much money you should borrow for farm operations	1	2	3	4	5	6
What farm equipment to buy	1	2	3	4	5	6

How do you view your future in farming? (Circle number)

1. Very favorably
2. Somewhat favorably
3. Unsure
4. Somewhat unfavorably
5. Very unfavorably

What was your total household income before taxes in 1981? (Circle response)

1. Less than $5,000
2. $5,000 to $9,999
3. $10,000 to $14,999
4. $20,000 to $29,999
5. $30,000 to $39,999
6. $40,000 to $49,999
7. $50,000 to $59,999
8. $60,000 to $69,999
9. $70,000 or more

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, C. Oran Little, Director
Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, H. Rouse Caffey, Chancellor

The Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station follows a nondiscriminatory policy in programs and employment.